

Supreme Court, U. S.

FILED

OCT 6 1978

MICHAEL RODAK, JR., CLERK

IN THE SUPREME COURT
OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER TERM, 1978

No. 78-623

SHARON ROGERS,
Petitioner

vs.

FRANCIS LOUGH,
Magistrate for Wetzel County,
West Virginia,
Respondent.

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE
WEST VIRGINIA SUPREME COURT OF APPEALS

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Petitioner Sharon Rogers respectfully requests the Court to issue a Writ of Certiorari to review the judgment of the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals entered July 10, 1978 denying her petition for a writ of prohibition directed against a criminal prosecution pending before Respondent, a lay magistrate.

OPINION BELOW

The order of the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals denying petitioner's petition for a writ of prohibition to Respondent, one justice dissenting, is unreported. It is attached as Appendix A.

JURISDICTION

The judgment of the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals was entered July 10, 1978. This Court's jurisdiction is invoked under 28 U.S.C. §1257(3).^{1/}

1/ The denial of a petition for a writ of prohibition divesting a magistrates Court of criminal jurisdiction by the State's highest Court is a final order appealable to this Court under 28 U.S.C. §1257(2)(3), because a writ of prohibition attacking the jurisdiction of a court is a separate suit from that contemplated by the court to which the writ is sought to be applied and produces a final order under section 25 of the Judiciary Act (which parallels 28 U.S.C. §1257 in all relevant respects). Weston vs. Charleston, 27 U.S. 441 (1829)

(fn. 1/con't)

(Chief Justice Marshall). In Weston, as in the present case, the request for the writ was based upon the alleged constitutional invalidity of a state statute. The Court held that it was of no importance that the Constitutional challenge could be raised along with the underlying action in the lower Court. 27 U.S. 441 at 469. Weston remains controlling authority. The Court more recently held that, where a plaintiff sought a writ of prohibition to prevent a probate Court from taking jurisdiction of condemnation proceedings on the ground that the statutory authority for the action violated the Fourteenth Amendment, the denial of the request by the state's highest court was a final order. Mount Vernon-Woodberry CottonDuck vs. Alabama Interstate Power, 240 U.S. 36 (Holmes, J.). See Madruga vs. Superior Court, 346 U.S. 556 (1954) (construing 28 U.S.C. 1257); Bandini Petroleum Company vs. Superior Court, 284 U.S. 8; Missouri vs. Taylor, 266 U.S. 200 (1924). The fact that the underlying action in this case is criminal does not affect the result. Rescue Army vs. Municipal Court, 331 U.S. 549 (1947).

QUESTION PRESENTED

Whether the rule of North vs. Russell, 427 U.S. 328 (1976), which holds that a criminal defendant is not deprived of liberty without due process of law or effective assistance of counsel by a first tier trial before a non-law trained judge when the defendant can painlessly obtain trial de novo before a law trained judge by standing mute or pleading guilty, extends as well to states which require the defendant to contest guilt at the first tier in order to obtain the right to trial de novo before a law trained judge.

2/

STATUTORY PROVISIONS INVOLVED

United States Constitution, Amendments Six and Fourteen. West Virginia Annotated Code, Sections 50-1-4, 50-2-3, 1978. Supplement.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Petitioner was arrested under two warrants executed by Respondent on June 11, 1978 charging her with assault and battery and trespass. They are attached as Appendix C. Both charges are misdemeanors. West Virginia has a two tier trial system for misdemeanors. The first tier is presided over by magistrates who do not have to be lawyers. The West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals has consistently sustained such trial by lay magistrates over federal constitutional objection. See, e.g.,

2/ Attached as Appendix B under Rule 23(d).

State ex rel. Moats vs. Janco, 154 W.Va. 887, 180 S.E.2nd 74 (1971). In order to gain a trial before a lawyer judge, petitioner would have to stand trial in magistrates' Court. Petitioner could not shorten her ordeal in Magistrates Court by pleading guilty or standing mute. Guilty pleas at the first tier terminate the case before the second tier can be reached. See Batey and Fuller, Streamlining Criminal Procedure in Magistrates' Court, 79 W.Va.L.Rev. 339, 346 (1977).

Before trial, petitioner petitioned for a writ of prohibition from the Supreme Court of Appeals, which has original jurisdiction to entertain discretionary writs^{3/}. Petitioner, proceeding pro se, sought to prohibit respondent, who is a non-lawyer Magistrate, from assuming jurisdiction over petitioner's pending trial on the ground, inter alia, that she would be "deprived of the due process of law guaranteed by the Constitution of the ... United States of America." The Court denied the writ, Justice Harshbarger dissenting, but granted sua sponte a ninety day stay of the judgment to permit review in this Court.^{4/}

^{3/} The petition is attached as Appendix D.

^{4/} The stay order is attached as Appendix E.

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE WRIT

THE CASE INVOLVES AN ISSUE OF GREAT IMPORTANCE LEFT OPEN BY THE COURT'S RECENT DECISION IN NORTH VS. RUSSELL, 427 U.S. 328 (1976).

At least twenty eight states provide trials before non-lawyer judges. North vs. Russell, 427 U.S. 328 at 333, n.4 (1976). In North, the Court sustained the Kentucky scheme, which had a first tier of lay magistrates and a right to trial de novo before a law trained judge, over Sixth and Fourteenth Amendment attack. Crucial to the Court's decision was the fact that Kentucky permitted a defendant to plead guilty at the first tier and, upon assertion of the right to trial de novo, to bear no consequences of that plea-- a painless bypass. (427 U.S. 337). In addition to West Virginia, at least four other states do not allow defendants to painlessly by-pass the first tier trial before non-lawyer judges.^{5/} In each of these five states misdemeanor defendants are forced to bear the financial, emotional and temporal burdens of

^{5/} Young vs. Konz, 558 P.2nd 791 (Wash. Supr. enbanc 1977); State vs. Duncan, 238 S.E.2nd 208 (S.C. Supr. 1977); Treiman vs. State ex rel. Miner, 343 So.2nd 819 (Fla. Supr. 1977); Palmer vs. Superior Court, 114 Ariz. 279, 560 P.2nd 797 (1977).

a useless first trial before a lay judge.

Unless North is expressly limited those states which presently allow some form of by-pass to the second tier are free to abandon those practices and funnel everyone through the first tier. This could be done with the intent or result that those defendants with either marginal defenses or limited financial and emotional resources will forego the second trial. This would, of course, save those states the costs of providing everyone at sometime all of their constitutional rights. But it is patently unfair to cut costs by placing substantial impediments upon a criminal defendant's ability to exercise her constitutional rights.

THE ISSUES PRESENTED HAVE NOT
BEEN DECIDED BY THIS COURT.

There are two components to petitioner's due process claim that she has a right to be heard before a lawyer judge in the first instance where she does not have unrestricted access to a trial de novo presided over by a lawyer judge. Neither of these components have been settled by this Court's most recent decisions concerning the applicability of constitutional safeguards to the first tier of a two tier state trial system. North vs. Russell, 427 U.S. 328 (1976); Ludwig vs. Massachusetts, 427 U.S. 618 (1976). The Sixth Amendment right to effective assistance of counsel confers the right to be tried before a lawyer-judge. See North vs. Russell, 427 U.S. 328 at 342, 343

(Stewart. J. Dissenting); Gordon vs. Justice Court, 12 Cal.3rd 323, 115 Cal. Rptr. 632 (1974). This issue was not adversely decided by North. In North, the court, after setting forth the same argument, said "in the context of the Kentucky procedures...it is unnecessary to reach the question..." North *supra* at 334.

Assuming a constitutional right to a trial before a lawyer judge at either trial stage, under present West Virginia statutes and procedure one must be afforded this right in magistrates' court. North and Ludwig, when read together seem to stand for the proposition that a state can forego extending some constitutional rights at the first tier where the defendant has painless access to those constitutional rights at the second tier.

In North, this court upheld Kentucky's system because defendants are not prejudiced by it. They can assure themselves a trial presided over by a lawyer-judge by either appealing from a verdict of conviction at the first level or by pleading guilty at the first level and proceeding directly to the second level. The ability to totally by-pass the first tier by pleading guilty seemed to be the dispositive factor. The court cited Colten vs. Kentucky, 407 U.S. 104 (1972) a number of times in support of this contention. North, *supra*, at 335, 336, 337.

The importance of the ability to bypass the first tier was underscored in Ludwig vs. Massachusetts, 427 U.S. 618

(1976). In Ludwig the defendant was denied a jury trial at the first level. In light of Duncan vs. Louisiana, 391 U.S. 145 (1968) the court was squarely faced with the issue of when if ever may a state deny a constitutional protection to a defendant at the first trial level. The court upheld the Massachusetts procedure because while "unlike the two-tier Kentucky system under consideration in Colton vs. Kentucky, supra, an accused in Massachusetts does not avoid trial in the first instance by pleading guilty, nevertheless he achieves essentially the same result by an established informal procedure known as 'admitting sufficient findings of fact...' The procedure is used if the defendant wishes to waive a trial in the District Court and save his rights for a trial in the Superior Court on the appeal." 427 U.S. 621.

Under current West Virginia law, there is no way for a defendant in a misdemeanor prosecution to by-pass trial in magistrates' court. Unlike parties in a civil suit, the criminal defendant has no right of removal. West Virginia Code Ann. S50-4-8 (Cum. Supp. 1976). He may not avoid a trial in magistrates' court by pleading guilty and then exercise his right to a trial de novo. The West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals has repeatedly stated that there is no right to appeal from a verdict rendered upon a plea of guilty. Batey & Fuller, Streamlining Criminal Procedure in Magistrates Court, 79 W.Va.L.Rev. 338 at 346 (1977); State vs. Stone, 101 W.Va. 53, 131 S.E. 872 (1926); Nicely vs. Butcher, 81 W.Va. 247,

94 S.E. 137 (1917); Accord State ex rel. Wright vs. Boles, 149 W.Va. 371, 141 S.E. 2nd 76 (1965)." Likewise, a West Virginia misdemeanor defendant may not take advantage of an informal by-pass procedure like the one approved in Ludwig. Such an established informal procedure simply does not exist in West Virginia. Consequently, the defendant in Magistrates' court must suffer a full trial in that court before he is granted access to the circuit court" Batey and Fuller supra at 347.

THE STATE COURT ORDER IS IN CONFLICT WITH THE CURRENT TREND OF SUPREME COURT DECISION.

The rationale of Gideon and Argersinger plainly mandates that "the judge conducting the trial will be able to understand what the defendant's lawyer is talking about...and a lawyer for the defendant will be able to do little or nothing to prevent an unjust conviction. In a trial before such a [lay] judge, the constitutional right to the assistance of counsel thus becomes a hollow mockery..." North vs. Russell, 427 U.S. 328 (1976) (Stewart J., Dissenting). Ludwig comes close to recognizing the injuries posed by West Virginia practice. "The question remains whether it (informal by-pass procedure) unconstitutionaly burdens the exercise of that right: (1) By imposing the financial cost of an additional trial...and (3) by imposing the increased psychological and physical hardships of two trials" 427 U.S. 618 at 626. The majority termed these

burdens "not unreal and...in an individual case, [may] impose a hardship" 427 U.S. 618 at 626. To five justices of this Court this burden was not unconstitutional because of the informal by-pass procedure. Mr. Justice Stevens, speaking for four justices in dissent, articulated another substantial burden which is applicable to petitioner. "We must also recognize the likelihood that some jurors at the second tier trial will be aware of the first conviction. Such awareness inevitably compromises the defendant's presumption of innocence. Moreover, a judge's instructions cannot adequately avoid this risk of prejudice without creating the additional risk of letting other jurors know about the first conviction" 427 U.S. 618 at 637.

Finally, the state can offer no significant legitimate interest that is served by forcing the defendant to stand one trial merely to have it wiped away when he exercises his appeal of right. "The only reason I can perceive for not allowing such a waiver illustrates the vice of the system. A defendant who can afford the financial and psychological burden of one trial may not be able to withstand the strain of a second. Thus, as a practical matter a finding of guilt in the first tier proceeding will actually end some cases that would have been tried by a jury if the defendant had the right to waive the first tier proceeding" 427 U.S. 618 at 634, 635 (Stevens J., Dissenting) See generally Batey and Fuller, Streamlining Criminal Procedure in Magistrate Court, 79 W.Va.L.Rev. 339, 346-352 (1977).

CONCLUSION

A writ of certiorari should be issued to review the judgment below.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael E. Geltner

Larry J. Ritchie

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APPENDICES

App. A

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

At a Regular Term of the Supreme Court of Appeals continued and held at Charleston, Kanawha County, on the 10th day of July, 1978, the following order was made and entered, to-wit:

State of West Virginia ex rel. Sharon Rogers
vs. Prohibition
Francis Lough, Magistrate for Wetzel County,
West Virginia

On a former day, to-wit, January 23, 1978, came the petitioner, Sharon Rogers, pro se, and presented to the Court her petition with certificate of service, and note of argument in support thereof, praying for a writ of prohibition to be directed against the respondent, Francis Lough, Magistrate of Wetzel County, West Virginia, as therein set forth. Upon consideration whereof, a majority of the Court is of opinion that a rule should not be awarded, and the prayer of the petition is therefore denied. Justice Harshbarger would grant. Justices Harshbarger and McGraw would grant a ninety day stay under the provisions of Code, 58-5-31, as requested in oral argument.

A True Copy

Attest: /s/ George Singleton
Clerk Supreme Court of
Appeals

App. B

§50-1-4. Qualifications of magistrates; training; oath; continuing education; time devoted to public duties.

Each magistrate shall be at least twenty-one years of age, shall have a high school education or its equivalent, shall not have been convicted of any felony or any misdemeanor involving moral turpitude and shall reside in the county of his election. No magistrate shall be a member of the immediate family of any other magistrate in the county. In the event more than one member of an immediate family shall be elected in a county, only the member receiving the highest number of votes shall be eligible to serve. For purposes of this section, immediate family means the relationship of mother, father, sister, brother, child or spouse. Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions of this section, each person who held the office of justice of the peace on the fifth day of November, one thousand nine hundred seventy-four, and who served in or performed the functions of such office for at least one year immediately prior thereto shall be deemed qualified to run for the office of magistrate in the county of his residence.

No person shall assume the duties of magistrate unless he shall have first attended and completed a course of instruction in rudimentary principles of law and procedure which shall be given between the date of election and the beginning of the magistrate's term in accordance with the

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supervisory rules of the supreme court of appeals.

All magistrates shall be required to attend such other courses of continuing educational instruction as may be required by supervisory rule of the supreme court of appeals. Failure to attend such courses of continuing educational instruction without good cause shall constitute neglect of duty. Such courses shall be provided at least once every other year. Persons attending such courses outside of the county of their residence shall be reimbursed by the State for expenses actually incurred not to exceed thirty-five dollars per day and for travel expenses at the rate of fifteen cents per mile for one round trip.

Each magistrate shall, before assuming the duties of office, take an oath of office to be administered by the circuit judge of the county, or the chief judge thereof if there is more than one judge of the circuit court. Each magistrate shall maintain the qualifications for office at all times.

Each magistrate who serves five thousand or less in population shall devote such time to his public duties as shall be required by rule or regulation of the judge of the circuit court, or the chief judge thereof if there is more than one judge of the circuit court. Each magistrate who serves more than five thousand in population shall devote full time to his public

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duties. As nearly as practicable the work load and the total number of hours required shall be divided evenly among the magistrates in a county by such judge. (1976, c.33.)

§50-2-3. Criminal jurisdiction.

In addition to jurisdiction granted elsewhere to magistrate courts or a justice of the peace, magistrate courts shall have jurisdiction of all misdemeanor offenses committed in the county and to conduct preliminary examinations on warrants charging felonies committed within the county. A magistrate shall have the authority to issue arrest warrants in all criminal matters, to issue warrants for search and seizure and, except in cases involving capital offenses, to set and admit to bail.

Magistrate courts shall have the jurisdiction of violations of subsection(c), section four hundred one [§60A-4-401], article four, chapter sixty-A of this Code under the provisions of section four hundred seven [§60A-4-407] of such article, and may discharge the defendant under the provisions of section four hundred seven of said article four. The exercise of such jurisdiction shall not preclude the right of the accused to petition the circuit court of the county for probation under the provisions of section four [§62-12-4], article twelve, chapter sixty-two of this Code. (1976, c.33.)

App. C

INFORMATION FOR WARRANT

State of West Virginia, Wetzel County, to-wit:

Judith Hess complains that on the 11th day of June, 1978, and prior to the making of this complaint, in the County of Wetzel and State of West Virginia, Sharon Rogers did unlawfully in and upon one Judith Hess an assault did make and her, the said Sharon Rogers, did then and there unlawfully beat, bruise, and wound and ill-treat, and other wrongs to her then and there did, to the great damage of the said Judith Hess against the peace and dignity of the State.

The said Judith Hess therefore prays that the said Sharon Rogers may be apprehended and held to answer the said complaint and be dealt with in relation thereto as the law may require.

/s/ Judith Hess

Subscribed and sworn to before me, this 12th day of June, 1978.

/s/ Magistrate

A & B -

WARRANT FOR ARREST

Case No. 78-M-292

State of West Virginia, Wetzel County,

App. C

to-wit:

To Any W. Va. Law Enforcement Officer:
Whereas, Judith Hess has this day made complaint and information on oath before me Francis B. Lough, a Magistrate in said County, that Sharon Rogers, 317 Foundry Street, New Martinsville, W.V., Defendant did commit a Misdemeanor, in that the said Defendant on the 11th day of June, 1978, and prior to the issuance of this warrant, in said County did unlawfully in and upon one Judith Hess an assault did make and her, the said Sharon Rogers, did then and there unlawfully beat, bruise, and wound and ill-treat, and other wrongs to her then and there did, to the great damage of the said Judith Hess--against the peace and dignity of the State

Therefore, we command you in the name of the State of West Virginia, forthwith to apprehend the said Sharon Rogers, and bring that person before me or before some other magistrate in said County, to answer said complaint, and to be further dealt with in relation thereto according to law.

Given under my hand this 12th day of June, 1978.

/s/ Magistrate

Executed By: /s/ Lind Adams, 6/12/78: in Wetzel County

App. C

INFORMATION FOR WARRANT

State of West Virginia, Wetzel County, to-wit:

Sarah L. Powell complains that on the 11th day of June, 1978, and prior to the making of this complaint, in the County of Wetzel and State of West Virginia, Sharon Rogers did unlawfully defy an order to leave property owned by Sarah L. Powell, personally communicated to her by Sarah L. Powell thus committing trespass on Sarah L. Powell's property other than a structure or conveyance in violation of Chapter 61 Article 3b Section 3 of W. Va. Code as amended against the peace and dignity of the State.

The said Sarah L. Powell therefore prays that the said Sharon Rogers may be apprehended and held to answer the said complaint and be dealt with in relation thereto as the law may require.

/s/ Sarah L. Powell

Subscribed and sworn to before me, this 12th day of June, 1978.

/s/
Magistrate

Trespass - 61-3B-3

WARRANT FOR ARREST

Case No. 78-M-291

App. C

State of West Virginia, Wetzel County to-wit:

To Any W. Va. Law Enforcement Officer:
Whereas, Sarah L. Powell has this day made complaint and information on oath before me Francis B. Lough, a Magistrate in said County, that Sharon Rogers, 317 Foundry Street, New Martinsville, W. Va., Defendant did commit a Misdemeanor, in that the said Defendant on the 11th day of June, 1978, and prior to the issuance of this warrant, in said County did unlawfully defy an order to leave property owned by Sarah L. Powell, personally communicated to her by Sarah L. Powell thus committing trespass on Sarah L. Powell's property other than a structure or conveyance in violation of Chapter 61 Article 3b Section 3 of W. Va. Code as amended against the peace and dignity of the State

Therefore, we command you in the name of the State of West Virginia, forthwith to apprehend the said Sharon Rogers, and bring that person before me or before some other magistrate in said County, to answer said complaint, and to be further dealt with in relation thereto according to law.

Given under my hand this 12th day of June, 1978.

/s/
Magistrate

Executed by: /s/ Lind Adams, 6/12/78: In
Wetzel County

App. D

IN THE SUPREME COURT
OF APPEALS OF WEST VIRGINIA

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA, ex
realtor, Sharon Rogers,
Petitioner

vs.

Case No. _____

FRANCIS LOUGH, Magistrate
for Wetzel County, West
Virginia,
Respondent

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF PROHIBITION

Now comes the petitioner, in propria
persona, and files this her petition for
a writ of prohibition against Francis
Lough, Magistrate for Wetzel County, West
Virginia, the respondent. Petitioner as-
signs as her grounds the following:

1. On or about June 12, 1978, peti-
tioner was arrested and charged with the
offenses of assault and battery and crim-
inal trespass.
2. Petitioner has valid constitution-
al defenses to the alleged criminal offen-
ses.
3. The respondent is not a member of
the bar of the State of West Virginia or
licenses to practice law in any other
state. The respondent has received no
formal legal education.
4. If the trial of the foregoing
criminal offenses is permitted to continue
the petitioner will be deprived of the due
process of law guaranteed by the Consti-

App. D

tution of the State of West Virginia and
the United States of America, because re-
spondent is unqualified to administer the
same.

Wherefore, petitioner prays for the
entry of an Order prohibiting the re-
spondent, or any other person, who is not
a member of the bar of the State of West
Virginia or who has not received a formal
legal education, from proceeding with the
trial of the aforementioned offenses.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ _____
Sharon Rogers, Petitioner
P.O. Box 490
New Martinsville, West
Virginia 26511

App. E

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

At a Regular Term of the Supreme Court of Appeals continued and held at Charleston, Kanawha County, on the 14th day of July, 1978, the following order was made and entered, to-wit:

State of West Virginia ex rel. Sharon Rogers

vs. Prohibition

Francis Lough, Magistrate, Wetzel County, West Virginia

This day came the relator, Sharon Rogers, pro se, and presented to the Court her motion in writing to stay the execution of the judgment of this Court entered July 10, 1978, denying relator's petition for a rule in prohibition, for a period of ninety days from the end of the present term, pending an application to the Supreme Court of the United States for an appeal or writ of certiorari to the judgment of this Court, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 58, Article 5, Section 31, of the Code of West Virginia.

Upon consideration whereof, the Court is of opinion to and doth grant said motion. It is therefore considered and ordered that the execution of the judgment entered on July 10, 1978, be suspended for a period of ninety days from the end of this term of court, in order to permit the aforesaid relator to apply to the Supreme Court of the United States for an

App. E

appeal or writ of certiorari. Justice Neely absent.

A True Copy

Attest: George W. Singleton,
Clerk Supreme Court of Appeals

by: s/ Barbara M. Mellace
Administrative Assistant